

Series I
Correspondence,
1932-1973

Box 1, Folder 15

October 30, 1943
- December 23,
1943

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

30 October 1943.

Dear Hugh:

It was almost four months ago that I left the War College and a great many things have occurred since that time, most of which of course, are not repeatable. However, I think I can safely say without violating Censorship Regulations that what I forecasted, if I took a cruiser, has come to pass. That is, I have already smelt powder in action. I think that the reports will soon be in your hands, or are already there, and I suggest that you look them over for information. I can't tell you how pleased I am that such should have been my good fortune and I know that you are enthusiastic also. I miss the War College and all that it stands for very much indeed, but I wouldn't give up this chance for anything; neither would you.

I have been wondering how the Lunch Club has been getting on. Those Waves are a thoroughly nice group of young women and I often think of Deedy, Bobby, and Jeanny. There is a rumor out here that one of these three has married, and I understand, from the description, that it is Deedy. I hope that, if this is so, the Lunch Club feels that the new husband is worth while, because Deedy is too fine a person to be wasted "on the desert" for, shall we say, "patriotic reasons". Of course there was always that fellow from North Africa to consider. Perhaps he got in and won out after all.

I suppose there are Waves out in this area, but I don't recollect seeing any of them. Perhaps, when one is at sea, one is not quite so observative as one might be were one on shore. I did see some most attractive ones around San Francisco and Mare Island, and I wouldn't have minded taking a few of them on here merely for "protection".

I hope things are going well with you. I have always thought a lot of you and I have always regretted the fact that they haven't given you, for one reason or another which no one as yet has ever seemed able to understand, the stars that they seem to have given practically everyone else in your branch. It simply doesn't make sense, but it must to somebody somewhere. To me it's one of the great mysteries of the war and I hope to get an answer some day.

I wrote a letter some time ago to the Admiral there, giving him the reaction of some of the officers here concerning the War College's comments on exercises. I hope that he has shown that to you because it is quite an interesting fact. The College's comments are viewed with deep interest and I am getting to be more and more convinced that the College is getting more and more recognized. I have noticed the assignment of officers to staffs, especially the larger ones. I have noticed the officers at sea and I feel satisfied that what you and the other officers have been working on so hard is finally bearing fruit. As a matter of fact, even here (meaning the War College men) we seem to be succeeding more and more in putting into effect some of the methods of thought which we have all strived for so long. In

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this connection I have to be a little careful myself because one Admiral referred to me, the other day, as "The Reporter." He said this in a friendly way and was referring particularly to a letter which I wrote and which you probably also have in your files by now. Nearly everyone agrees with the substance of the letter but most officers seem reluctant to express themselves forcefully on any subject, but my last Admiral did, and it was right along my line. I felt quite gratified.

I miss seeing your charming Winnie and also Betty Oldendorf. They were always very nice to me there in Newport and, although I didn't see as much of them as I should have liked, I have always had a deep affection for them. They are just swell. I am going to write Betty a letter one of these days to find out how her famous garden prospered during the summer. She worked on it so hard during the spring that it would be only just for her to have had decent results. Certainly, I should like some of her products here right now. I wonder what she hears from Ole.

Please give my best regards to everyone at the War College. I don't know one of them there that I don't thoroughly appreciate and I look forward to their return to sea very soon indeed. We need fellows like them out here.

I have seen quite a lot of Larry DuBose. He has a nice command with a fine bunch of officers and I think he should be heard from before the war is over.

Please remember me most kindly to the Lunch Club and especially to Captain Bowley who seems to be one of its backbones and for whom I have great respect.

I wonder if Ensign Dorothy Burton is one of the members of the Lunch Club now? I know that she wanted to be and I know that she would be a good member. She always gave me quite a laugh because she was so attractive and so feminine, and really had "it" in a rather big way.

Do you ever go down to the Reading Room any more? You are such a good pool player that it would be too bad if you decided to gradually retire from that sport. The civilian population of the Reading Room are a fine bunch and seem to like some of us. I think it is a good thing for all of you at the College to maintain close relations with them. Frankly, the Reading Room is another place that I really miss. I wrote them a letter of Aloha which they evidently got as Mr. Doyle wrote me a letter about it. I shall reply to him soon as the letter was most amusing.

Take care of yourself and remember me kindly to everyone that you think of.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Best regards to you, as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. BATES,
Captain, U.S. Navy.

Captain Hugh Douglas, USN,
Naval War College,
Newport, Rhode Island.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Confidential

9 November 1943

Dear Admiral Fye:

Four months have now elapsed since I left the Naval War College, and even if I say it myself, it is hard to believe it. The last letter I wrote to you was dated Mare Island. Shortly after writing that letter, which was dated 3 September, I requested that my ship be assigned for training in an area other than along the Pacific coast, and as a result I was ordered out where we are now. The Minneapolis was having a tough time in the Yard when I arrived and I worked awfully hard to get her out of the Yard. Fortunately the Yard seemed as anxious as I was to get her out, which helped matters considerably. However, the Yard nearly put us out before proper tests on new equipment had been made and it required all my persuasion and knowledge to insure that everything was fully tested before leaving the Yard. This has paid dividends out here for we have already been in action and our entire performance was, to quote the Admiral, "Exemplary in every respect". When I finally succeeded in leaving the Yard I got a letter from the Production Manager, quoted in part as follows: "We appreciate your cooperation and understanding in a situation which we know didn't look too good and might have developed unpleasantly."

As a matter of interest, Captain Dee's ship is still under overhaul and he is working hard to get it out. It seems a crime that ships that are required so much could be delayed so long. However, that is the province of Cominch and none of my business after all.

I do know though that upon my arrival in this area the number one Admiral asked me to lunch and told me that he was very glad to see me and that he was very desirous that I should partake in the next action. I assured him that that was exactly what I desired and asked when the next action would occur. He told me, "in about a week", and I said that I would be ready to go if he could give me a few days training as my ship had not fired a shot for nine months and a large portion of the crew were green. I got four days training and then went on the next operation where my good ship led them into action.

I can not begin to tell you with what satisfaction I viewed this chance. I had wanted to get into combat for a long time and had wanted to see how things actually went. It was gratifying to see how the Minneapolis behaved. Everyone did their jobs as veterans and we really came through, in my mind, with flying colors. Let us hope that it continues.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

9 November 1943

Another gratifying thing to me is to note that a large number of graduates of the War College and of the U.S. Staff College are out here and are doing the planning. I have noted that the method, or shall we say the form, used in their analysis is not entirely the same as ours but is, to all intent and purposes, the same. I believe that, as more and more of our graduates reach these staffs, the method as laid down in the green book is going to be the accepted method. Things are happening in the Pacific today which require good planning and boldness of execution. I think that the War College has done things in developing leaders capable of both of the above. Wherever I go I quietly boost the War College and I seem generally able to point out defects in planning of operations which might not be good.

The question of command of task groups interests me. At the present time the airmen have the upper hand, but whether this is best for the service or is a political gesture to air I do not know. Frankly I am not one of those who believe that because a task group has an aviator in it, that officer should be in supreme command. On the contrary, I firmly believe that where a commander is properly air minded he should be better able to command a task group than a man with aviation background only. I think that aviators are a little too careful of their planes; they want to recall them too early. They have a tendency to permit logistics situations to unduly affect the tactical situation. All of these facts are, I think, being ironed out, but at present we must learn again the hard way without profiting through the lessons, not only of past history, but also of immediate present history.

I suppose that you know better than most everyone else what is going on in the Pacific so I will not touch upon these matters.

I want to wish you and Mrs. Pye a Merry, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I have said before what I am about to say now and I hope that you will not find the repetition distasteful, that you are the only officer in the Navy, in my mind, capable of holding the presidency of the War College. The job is of enormous importance and I can see it becoming more so every day. As the function of the college is, basically, to improve professional judgment, its lessons strike not only in the planning field, but in the field of command as well. So in the end I feel that you and your War College are directly contributing in the strongest way to ultimate victory.

With warmest personal regards to you and Mrs. Pye,

Yours very sincerely,

R. W. BATES,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

Vice Admiral W. S. Pye, U.S.N.,
Naval War College,
Newport, Rhode Island.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Confidential

9 November 1943.

Dear Admiral:

It has been some time since I have written to you, in fact, just about two months so I have quite a bit to talk over now.

In the first place I want to thank you for your letter of 2 October and I was particularly pleased to know from it that you are now totally recovered from what I had feared might have been something serious. Fortunately the Creator evidently decided that you were too important to our war effort to be allowed to be sick any length of time, and therefore, He insured your prompt return to health.

The Minneapolis has done very well to date and I hope will do very well in the future. We had quite a difficult time in the Navy Yard as I indicated in my letter to you because, although Mare Island is probably as good as any Navy Yard, there is nevertheless a large element which either does not know how to work regularly or does not choose to do so. I had considerable discussion with the Yard over my ship and over what I expected of the Yard as regards the proper functioning of the equipment installed. The Yard and I went round and round because I was determined that when I brought the Minneapolis into the battle area she was to be as fit as it was humanly possible to make her. In this I succeeded rather well, although at the time I did not think so. However, since being here, other ships overhauled at the same time have incurred so much difficulty that I feel that the little we suffered was negligible. As a matter of fact, even the Yard, I think, thought that we were right because the Yard Production Manager wrote me, after we had left, in part as follows:

"We appreciate your cooperation and understanding in a situation which we know didn't look too good and might have developed unpleasantly."

Upon our arrival in this area the Number One Admiral invited me to dinner and told me he wished us to get into the next operation. I told him that I should like to do so but that I had had no firing within nine months and that I thought a few days training would be necessary. He agreed with me and sent me out for four days training, at the expiration of which I took part in an operation, the reports of which I presume are in your hands now. The operation was a most interesting one and a fine one for introducing the ship's company to the enemy. If you will read the reports you will find out what we were doing. I was quite proud of the ship's company as everyone behaved like the veterans they now are.

More operations are coming up in the Pacific as is evident daily in the

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papers, and I think that the time will not be too distant when we once again are letting go at the enemy. Our big job is to prevent him from letting go at us too advantageously.

I am about to drop a note to Admiral Pye to point out to him some of the things which I have found here and which should be of interest to all thinking men. In the first place, the thing which impresses me is the large number of Naval War College and U.S. Staff College graduates who are getting into important positions here on the various staffs. That, to me, is a most reassuring and healthy sign. Another thing I believe to be so, is that planning is more and more nearing the Green Book than has been so heretofore. In fact, the big staff asked me to look over some of their stuff and showed me a new form which they had developed. I told them that what they had wasn't new, that it was more or less along the lines of the Green Book, but that it was of less quality than the Green Book because it wasn't thorough enough, and I endeavored to show where the advantage of the Green Book lay. I don't think that my argument was accepted in toto but it is hard to show an old dog new tricks. Time will probably tell whether the seed I planted will bear a plant, a bush or a tree. I am hoping for a tree. In the second place, an item that bothers me to a degree is the fact that air, in my mind, is almost too important in this area and, therefore, the air leaders have an unusual, high position in the military hierarchy. I thoroughly believe in air, as you well know, and I have thought of nothing but air for well over twenty years. I even took flying lessons on my own during the last war but was stopped by my Captain who said he didn't want me bumped off. However, I am one of those who believe that air power is merely one weapon, although perhaps on occasions the only weapon. But I can not subscribe to the fact that it is always the only weapon. There are times when the gun is definitely superior to air; therefore, it strikes me that, insofar as is possible and practical, the command of a task group or force should fall to the commander best qualified to handle that type of operations, whether he be an air officer or not. There can be no doubt but that air admirals are important but so also are surface admirals who are air minded. I recollect that one of the great discussions we had with Roy Howard, Major Elliot and Gram Swing, was over the importance of air and whether it was necessary for admirals to be flyers. It was my belief that we had thoroughly convinced them that an air minded Admiral was far superior to an Admiral with an air background only.

I do not know what is back of the national plan which gives air such a predominance in the national conception of war but I presume that part of it is political; part of it is, shall we say, the prayer and hope of the American people that the war can be settled by air almost single handedly, and part of it is due to the fact that our leaders have stressed air power strategically for such a long time. I myself still stand three square on that idea, that land, sea, and air all have vital places in the scheme of things and not one of them can in any way be considered to take precedence over the other. The boxer who can block only a left cross will probably be a sucker for a right one.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

I am certainly glad that I am at sea. As you know for well over a year I have made every effort to get my feet on a deck again and now that I have them there I hope that no one will try to take them off. I know that you feel the same and I know that you would give almost anything for a chance to be out here with us. I know that all your colleagues feel likewise. However, I want you to know that we feel pretty proud that you and they are there to help guide our destiny during these rough times.

Please remember me very kindly to Mrs. Kalbfus and also to the members of the General Board that I might happen to know, and especially to Admiral Rowcliff who is an old friend of mine and for whom I have always had a very high regard.

It may be a little early to wish you this but I want to wish you and Mrs. Kalbfus a Merry Christmas and a most Happy New Year. I expect to have one out here myself and I hope that everyone else will have the same.

I haven't any new jokes to send you from here because everyone seems to be almost too busy to think of them. When I went to dinner with the number one Admiral I produced a few that were told at Newport and they went very well for they seemed to be new. I think that Washington is well ahead of this place in that kind of humor.

Once again with warmest personal regards to you, I am,

Very sincerely,

R. W. BATES,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, USN,
General Board,
Navy Department,
Washington, D. C.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

9 November 1943

Dear Tom:

I suppose that by the time I return to this area you will have been detached. Best of luck wherever you may go.

I should appreciate it very much if you would produce the letter of the bombardment of an atoll I spoke about and see that it gets through the proper channels. It is part of this ship's report on the operations at Wake and should be attached thereto.

It was nice to see Corrine and she couldn't have been nicer to me. You are both a swell pair.

As ever,

R. W. BATES,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

Captain T. J. Keliher, Jr., USN,
Staff, Commander in Chief,
U. S. Pacific Fleet.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

CONFIDENTIAL

16 December 1943.

Dear Art:

Quite a long time has passed since I was last at the Navy Department, and quite a bit of scenery has been viewed by the undersigned since that date. I thought, therefore, that it would be a good idea to write to an old friend and wish him a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Frankly, I am addressing this letter to the Navy Department, but I have no sure way of knowing that you are still there. However, as the Commander in Chief would have nothing but brains around him, it is my guess that you are still there.

Things are going very well with me out here. I have just the command that I wished, and I have a fine ship. This is an exceptionally interesting thing when one considers that our personnel is at least 60% green and an equal percent of the officers are lacking in experience. When I came to sea, the Captain, Executive Officer, First Lieutenant, Gunnery Officer, Navigator, and Marine Officer were all new, and none had had any real experience in their jobs. After analyzing the situation, I turned to, with what I hope is my accustomed enthusiasm, and the results have been quite gratifying. We were the only large ship designated for "call fire" at a recent operation and this, if you please, on the request of the Marines. I have heard since that our gunnery has been of very high order. This shows what can be done in a short time with our present personnel, if we are determined to accomplish it.

I have been through three operations since joining the fleet, all of which were quite different, and all of which were quite successful for one reason or another. You have been out here so you know what the picture is; how things feel in action. I was surprised, in my own case, to find that I had no feeling whatsoever. That is, I went into these actions just exactly as I had gone into a target practice and, although we met some opposition, it was never enough to change my mental attitude. I don't think that I am alone in this feeling, as in one action our own shells at night passed so close to the bridge as to be seriously menacing. My Chief Yeoman, who is my talker, said, "Captain, I think I will just reach out and grab one of those." This indicated that, although he knew these shells were deadly, he was calm and unruffled. Without a doubt you encountered the same thing on the carriers.

Everybody is quite pleased now that we are getting underway. It has been a long night for most of us, but now that dawn has come we all realize that we will soon be in the full light of day. I think that everyone of us realizes the enormous labor that has gone into the industrial phases as well as that of the naval phases of this war. I further think that everyone realizes that Admiral King is probably almost, if not entirely so, solely responsible. I shall be quite interested some day to read exactly what he went through and the battles he has fought in order to make victory possible. What a guy!

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

I hope that this letter finds you in the best of health and enjoying your work. I know that you would much prefer to be at sea but everyone can't be here and you have had your say; besides, you have, at least, two stars on your collar. I think that the men afloat appreciate the need of having men, such as you, in key positions like yours and you simply must bow to the inevitable. That is what you get for being smart!

As for myself, I am feeling excellent. I find that war agrees with me fully and the harder the times the better I feel. It may sound silly but I feel better at sea than in port, and I find that now that I am in port for a few days my initiative has diminished.

I do hope that you will remember me most kindly to anyone in the Department whom I might know and I further hope that you will remember me most kindly to Kay. As for you, all I can say is, again I wish a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to a most able officer.

Your old pal,

R. W. Bates,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

Rear Admiral Arthur C. Davis, USN,
Office of the Commander in Chief,
Navy Department,
Washington 25, D.C.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

16 December 1943

Gentlemen:

On 19 November 1942, in accordance with a directive, I presume from the Congress, I turned in four tires to the Government. These tires were to be sold to the Government. Let us now see what happened! After my tires had passed through the hands of your agency in Newport - Railway Express Agency - I addressed a letter to the above concern, dated 19 August 1943, asking what had happened to my tires as I had received no word about them. I was advised that I would have to communicate elsewhere as the matter was out of their hands, or words to that effect. Someone evidently awakened to my query, because I am now in receipt of a check for my spare four tires, edited "Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Number 1,689,004". This check was for the enormous sum of \$4.60. Three of these tires were listed at 20¢, and one at \$4.00. This, of course, is a ridiculous and preposterous situation, and it is on this matter that I am requesting information.

The story of these tires is about as follows. I purchased them new with the car in November 1940, and in November 1942, a year ago, I had gone about, I should judge, 14,000 miles on them. I purchased four tires from the Firestone people which had been bruised and repaired. I took my four Firestone tires and these four original tires, plus my spare, and went to a tire expert and asked which I should hold. The opinion was that I would be wise to hold on to my original tires as they were considered to be in very good condition and should get another 15,000 miles on them. At least that was the estimate. So you can imagine my astonishment when I found that for three of these tires - I am leaving out the \$4.00 appraisal of one of them which I am sure was also in error - I received 20¢ each.

It is true that I agreed to accept the Appraiser's determination should he decide to go away from the appraisal made at the time of turning in the tires. This appraisal was supposed to be represented in the margin appraisal, D.S.C. Form T-24, which was forwarded to me with the check. There is little in this margin appraisal now excepting a number of check marks on the side, but to what they refer I have no knowledge as the edge seems to have been cut off of this form. The Government Appraiser was Tom Foley, but I am not sure that he did sign the form as there is a G.S. after his name.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

16 December 1943

I should appreciate a reply at the earliest possible moment as to what has actually happened to my tires, who actually appraised them, and how in heaven's name three good tires could be worth but 60¢. It simply doesn't make good sense!

Very truly yours,

R. W. BATES,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

Defense Supplies Corporation,
Washington, D. C.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

16 December 1943

Now, Mariad, of you I sing,
And in my mind fair flowers bring,
To think of you flat on your back,
With lungs quite in a "cul de sac".

But now you say that you are well,
And I am glad that you are swell,
For I was never mad at you,
But rather at the things you do.

From man to man, from horse to horse,
You used to fly right down the course,
Until at last old Ted and Y,
Went "hermantado" on the sly.

We said if Mariad is nuts,
Then none of us have any guts,
'Tis she that we should try and save,
From brandy, wine and ocean grave.

Now, now, hurray, you still wear mink,
So no one can make "lousy stink".
Excuse the French, my charming lass,
You know I'm lacking much in class.

But what I can say strongly now,
Is get your feet behind a plow,
And then you'll have, you need not fear,
A Merry Christmas and a Glad New Year.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

17 December 1943.

Dear Swede:

It has been a very very long time since I last heard from you but I suppose that you are as busy as I am and can not write much, if at all. However, I want you to know what is going on, so here goes.

As you perhaps have known for some time, I am out here in command of this ship. By "out here" I mean in the broad Pacific because I can not say exactly where I am, but you would know the place very well if I should name the place to you. Things are going along very smoothly for me and I am thoroughly enjoying the duty which the Creator has placed before me. I have already been in three engagements and found them all highly interesting, as well as quite different. Where they were, and what they were, unfortunately, I can not say.

I don't want to make you feel badly but as I told you long ago, I firmly believe that had your heart stood the strain you would now be wearing two stars and be in charge of one of the submarine groups. I am not saying this to make you feel badly for Christmas, but on the contrary it indicates my confidence in your ability. God knows you have plenty! The submarines, of course, have done very well indeed and the Vice Admiral is quite pleased with them, as well as are all of us. They have high morale, and are a splendid bunch of officers and men. Personally I believe that they are leading the way for all of us.

I hope that this letter finds you in the finest of health. I know that you have a tendency to work very hard and I also know that in so doing you menace your future. I have heard this more than once, and I trust that you will profit by your friends' desires, as well as the Medical Officer's instructions, and will take it easy. I know also that as you sit at home and read what is happening at sea, you begin to fret and become upset. So don't do it. I know this because any able competent officer would so fret.

I hope that this letter finds Ibby and your two daughters in fine form. I realize that your eldest daughter is a perfect raving beauty and I have no doubts but that she is turning the Naval Academy upside down. That is as it should be. That is what pretty women are for - to keep men topsy-turvy. As for our beloved Alice, she also, I guess, is beginning to change to a degree and I hope that she will be just as stunning as her sister, although, I fear, perhaps less blonde. I am very fond of both of them as you know, and I envy you your ownership.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

I am enclosing a check for \$37.50 which I hope you will expend for a \$25 bond for each of them for a Christmas present. I should prefer to send the bonds myself, but as I just got back in port and as the time is short, I have decided on this method which I hope you will approve.

Please give my best regards and warmest greetings to charming Ibbey, for whom I have always had a deep affection, and as for yourself and your family in toto, let me say, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

Your old friend,

R.W. Bates,
Captain, U.S. Navy.

Commander E. E. Haslett,
U.S. Naval Academy,
Annapolis, Maryland.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

UNCLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

17 December 1943.

Dear Johnnie:

I am writing you this letter on the advice of Walt Calhoun on the Baltimore. I know that you are quite busy, therefore, what I have to say, I will make quite short. I noted the other day, in a new Bureau Circular letter, that ships were going to be expected more and more to be on their own, as it were, and to select their Heads of Departments from those officers remaining on board. This is a good policy and generally, I think, most officers approve of it and realize the necessity. In my case, however, I am afraid that it will be quite some time before I can do this because it has already been done on this ship.

The Minneapolis, as you will recollect, was heavily torpedoed on 30 November of last year, and was in a Navy Yard status until September of this year. I took command in the Navy Yard at Mare Island and found out, to my interest and surprise, that the following officers had been detached:

1. Captain.
2. Executive Officer.
3. Navigator.
4. Gunnery Officer.
5. First Lieutenant.
6. Marine Officer.
7. Medical Officer.
8. Supply Officer.
9. Communication Officer.

Thus, I went to sea with an entire new setup which I have had to train myself. The Spotter had become the Gunnery Officer and had never fired a practice; the Assistant First Lieutenant had become the First Lieutenant; the Navigator was a Communication Officer once removed; and everyone else was absolutely new.

I have been at sea now three months and my Gunnery Officer, who's weaknesses I am rapidly learning, has just been detached, or that is, he will be in a few days. Fortunately the Bureau wisely anticipated this move and sent me a Lieutenant Commander as an assistant who is now taking over the duties of the Gunnery Officer. What I am interested in ascertaining about other officers and especially Heads of Departments, is how long am I to retain them? And if not for any length of time, then I request that I be sent about two competent Lieutenant Commanders, preferably Naval Academy, as make you learn Heads of Departments. I am requesting this because I haven't anybody now who seems capable of becoming, for example, my First Lieutenant or my Navigator, and who, in heaven's name will become the Executive once my present Executive becomes a Captain? I think that I can handle the matter of the Engineering Officer as I

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have a Naval Reserve whom I have been training.

Things are going along very well out here and I know that you would give your shirt to be here also. The Minneapolis is a fine ship with a fine crew and we are getting more and more able to do our maximum bit for whatever we may be called upon to do. But we are now down to bedrock and a long training period will be necessary to whip officers into shape so that they can become reliefs. In this connection, a number of my best Lieutenants and Lieutenants(jg) have requested either post graduate courses, or aviation. These officers have all been on board at least 2 - 4 years. I don't blame those who seek aviation because out here any young man can readily see that air has priority in everything and even Senior Line Admirals of long experience must serve in task groups under very junior Air Admirals.

With warmest personal regards to you and Ross Cooley, and to the Chief and Assistant Chief of the Bureau, I am as ever,

Your old friend,

R. W. Bates,
Captain, U.S. Navy.

Captain J.W. Roper, USN
Bureau of Naval Personnel,
Arlington Annex,
Arlington, Virginia.

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C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

UNCLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

22 December 1943.

Dear Admiral:

I can not begin to tell you with what sincere regret I learned recently that your old friend Dr. Cerio had departed from this world. I received a clipping from the Newport paper telling about this loss to the community, and at the same time, indicating that you among others were an honorary pall bearer. There can be no doubt but that Dr. Cerio was a very important influence on his community in Newport and, according to the article in the paper, he had been also a strong power for good, in his native Italy.

I didn't personally see much of Dr. Cerio, but, when I did he was exceptionally friendly, highly interesting, and modest. He loved his wine very much and he loved the lobster stew that Gus White used to make for New Year's Day at the Reading Room. The amount of stew and wine that he consumed was very large indeed. Then again, I remember when he introduced the game of Bocci to the Reading Room in Newport which for a time, was well liked and then, gradually, faded into disuse. It was too bad.

I know that several of the recent losses in Newport, among which was Mr. "Cannon Ball" Williams, as well as Dr. Cerio, are quite a blow to you. And I know that the departure of more and more of these old friends will make Newport somewhat more lonely than you had anticipated. However, there are many many other people in Newport who are wonderfully charming and I know that when this war is over and you and Mrs. Kalbfus retire to your home there, you will be very happy. Your lovely house was always a delight to all of us who had the pleasure of being in it, and I know that Mrs. Kalbfus, when she has a chance to put her artistic hands onto it again, will make it very much of a home.

Things are going very well with us here. An old friend of yours has his flag on this ship and I think that you know very well who it is. We have been through some very interesting affairs todate and I have enjoyed them as much as anyone can enjoy war. We came through all these unscathed, as did most of our ships and that, naturally, makes things appear somewhat better than they might otherwise appear.

I don't know whether the reports which are submitted by the various ships fall into your hands, but I would be interested if you would look over the reports from this ship and see what you think of them. We have been told by several Admirals that they were the best reports that they had seen submitted in three years, and if they are, I am gratified, because we spent considerable time in trying to make them worth while. After having tried to analyse the reports as received in the War College and after realizing how poor most of them were, I determined, in these reports, to try

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and obviate the weaknesses that I noticed then. I have endeavored to make comments which I hoped might be constructive in order that operations in the future might be better done, with minimum cost and in minimum time. I could tell you a great deal of what I think about a lot of things, but, unfortunately, I am not able to do so on this paper. I will say that the planners are quite anxious to obtain information, and in fact, a Captain and two Army Colonels on the Planning Staff of Cinopac had lunch with me today at their own request so that they might talk over lessons learned. The great need, of course, in all planning today is to recognize that we must take present day "averages" rather than past "averages". Present day performances are not up to those of several years ago. I think that if we will do this we will have accomplished a great deal.

There isn't any thing particularly new to report, but I did hear a story which I hope you will enjoy.

"A man came home one day by surprise and found no one in the house. He started looking around and found his wife lying in bed with what seemed to be a bundle under the sheet beside her. The husband reached over, grasped the sheet and pulled it back, and to his astonishment and anger, he discovered that his wife was nude and that this bundle was a very small man who also was nude. The husband said, "Sister, you had better start talking and talk fast because this is something that I can not tolerate." The wife said, "Dear, you remember that beautiful fur coat I have been wearing?" The husband said, "Yes," and the wife said, "Well, it was this little man here that bought it. And you remember that the mortgage on this house is paid? Well he paid that too. And," she said, "you have seen the beautiful new car I have and the nice rugs in the house; well he bought all of those too." Then the wife said, "Dear, that is all that there is to it. I have nothing more to say. It is up to you, what do you want me to do?" To this, the husband replied, "Don't you think that we should pull the sheet up over the man again for fear he might catch cold?"

Christmas will be here in a few days and I hope that it will find both you and Mrs. Kalbfus in that fine health which I am accustomed to see radiating from both of you.

With warmest regards and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I am as ever,

Yours sincerely,

Admiral Edward C. Kalbfus, USN
General Board,
Navy Department,
Washington, D. C.

R. W. Bates,
Captain, U.S. Navy.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

22 December 1943.

Dear George:

You may be wondering what happened to your letter of August 19 which you addressed to me, and I don't blame you, but I received your letter just a few days ago. It seems that it was underway for four months. It bears dates of September 2, September 4, October 24, November 5, and November 23. This shows how efficient our mail system actually is.

It was awfully nice to hear from you and to know that at last you are fixed up in a job you apparently like. I can imagine that the Utility Wing wasn't too much fun, but those assignments are all made down in Aeronautics and we have little to do with them. I imagine that in your new assignment, you may, as you indicated, be in action before you know it and perhaps have been already. My own command has been in three operations since I took her over and has, even though I say so myself, evidently done very well indeed. One of these days if you will look through the orders issued on the different operations, you will find what we did, but I can not say here anything about them.

Newport is changing somewhat since you left and I left, because poor old "Cannon Ball" Williams died about five months ago and Doctor Carlo died about a month ago. "Kitty Mouse" Jones married a fellow by the name of Ben Cook from Providence. As Gus White said, Cook is 58 so "Kitty Mouse" couldn't have married him for his youthful ardour. Jack Bergen, who had stomach trouble, has recently been in Newport and I understand he is quite well now. He has also been reported in San Francisco in company with Admiral Rosendahl; what that was about I don't know. Morgan Harris is back from the Mediterranean after having been relieved from his sweeper, where he did a very fine job. Persi Fraser was also in Newport on a three or four days leave.

I understand that there was great excitement in October when the Duke and Duchess of Windsor arrived to visit Mai Douglas. Frances Brooks threw a swell party for them at which Winnie Douglas sat next to the Duke and Hugh played golf with the Duke and Kenneth McCall. I shouldn't have minded being there for that affair because I should like to know the Duke a little, and knowing Frances so well, and also Mai, it might be possible that I'd have been invited to the party.

I forgot to say our old friend Mr. Agassiz died and in his place old Bradford Norman was elected president of the club. As a consequence of all this, Teddy Grinnell was elected a Governor of the Reading Room and I saw a letter from him to someone, in which he said he would have to act with decorum

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in the future. Our charming little friend Yvonne Thomas is now a mother, having had a little baby girl, and is now living in the Muenchinger-King, but I heard that she is going to New York or has already gone. And lastly, Mary Firestone died in New York on 1 December, after giving birth to a fine baby. She was such a swell person and seemed so healthy and was so respected by everyone that it seems a shame that the Creator should have called her so soon. I shall have to drop Roger a note. Poor devil! What a blow!

So much for your old home town and for what was my home town for the past three years. Very frankly I like Newport very much and it's owing to fellows like you and your beloved Diana that it was so pleasant for me. I shall always be grateful.

There isn't much new to report. I am going along very well here, am quite content, quite healthy, and quite pleased with my good ship, so Christmas for me will be very satisfactory. As for yourself, best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and if there is anyone in your gang whom I might know, give them my best wishes also.

Your old friend,

R. W. Bates,
Captain, U.S. Navy,

Lieutenant George Ryan,
1314
c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California.

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U. S. S. MINNEAPOLIS
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

24 December 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR: Admiral Giffin:

In accordance with your verbal memorandum of 22 December, the following comments relative to absenteeism in the Navy are made. I have studied Admiral Tausig's letter to you, and those to other officers, and I have been amazed but not surprised at the large number of men in the Naval Service who absent themselves daily from duty. I think that that matter can be taken up under a number of subheads. The major ones are, I think, as follows:

1. Public apathy.
2. Lack of training of enlisted personnel.
3. Lack of training of officer personnel.
4. Lack of recognition of fighting personnel.
5. Lack of uniformity of punishment.
6. Lack of interest in naval career.

A discussion of the above topics follows:

1. Public Apathy: When men go overleave today there seems to be little desire on the part of the people, such as existed in the last war, to bring them back to a realization of their responsibilities, and to turn them in to the proper authorities. I served in the Newport area for the first two years of this war and, so far as I could see, it mattered very little to the general public there whether men were absent from duty or not. I firmly believe that the general public might even go so far as to help them remain away. What has caused this public apathy, I do not know, but it has been found not only in the military service, but in the industrial world as well. The manager at one of our navy yards told me that he has a 10% absentee list of industrial workers every day. When one considers the large wages being paid these men and women, and when one considers that, by being absent, they lose as much as ten to twenty dollars a day, and they still remain absent, the fact that public apathy exists becomes self evident. With such a condition in our industrial world, and with such a mental attitude on the part of the public, is it any wonder that some of the misguided men of the military service likewise decide to steal a few days holiday?

2. Lack of Training of Enlisted Personnel: The Navy has increased in size enormously, which spreads the men of the regular establishment pretty thin indeed. This means then that unless the training in the training stations is thorough and of reasonable duration, the men coming to sea will be almost entirely uninformed as to the traditions and objectives of the Navy. For a long time, training in the training stations was of but three weeks duration and, in that time, the most that a man could learn would probably be a little bit of how to keep

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his uniform in shape, and of simple matters of drill.

Upon the arrival of recruits on board ship, they invariably find themselves in surroundings which are extremely, shall I say, strange and cold. They, therefore, have one or two strikes against them to start with, and they require a great deal of attention on the part of officers and petty officers to pass them through, what I call, this "homesick stage". Unfortunately, most of the officers are as green as the men, and they themselves are having their own difficulties. When a man finds himself in surroundings so uncongenial there arises within him, in many cases, an immediate desire to get away from it. Also, when men hear tales of serious fighting, both on board ship and ashore, the weaker souls among them recoil at the thought of combat and miss their ships deliberately. I feel that if the training period at the Naval Training Stations could be extended, and if the instructors there were more experienced so that the discipline of the Navy could be drilled into their souls, there would be less absenteeism there and on board ship later.

3. Lack of Training of Officer Personnel: A most serious handicap in the training of the enlisted man is the definite inadequacy of the officer personnel. This inadequacy is not due to the inability of the officers to perform their duties, if properly trained, but rather to the failure of the Navy to insure that they are properly trained before they are sent to sea. I have a great many officers on this vessel at the present time, and an extremely large part of them are Naval Reserves.

I find that the Naval Reserves are, as a general thing, not well informed, and I have therefore conducted schools for the purpose of completing their indoctrination. They are generally a fine body of highly intelligent, capable and willing young men, and most of them are rapidly improving under the hard test of war. I realize that it is almost impossible to fully indoctrinate officers on shore, and this lack of indoctrination would normally not be noticed were it not for the fact that these officers are assigned important billets in the battle setup of all ships. Therefore, they immediately become highly important and their deficiencies become more evident. The great weakness of all of these young Naval Reservists, and to a lesser degree of the young men from the Naval Academy, is their lack of association with men in the past in the capacity of leaders, and it is hard for them to get into the habit of giving orders. Most of them are young college men who have had nothing on their minds but getting through college, and the carefree existence that goes with it. To be taken out of this environment, to be commissioned as leaders, and to be placed on board ships in positions of great responsibility, necessarily places a heavy load upon each of them. It is surprising, under these conditions, how well they manage to shake down, after a time, and under suitable guidance. But during this shake down, and even after, these young officers find themselves leading men

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almost their own age, and often of equal sea and life experience. If they do not manage to handle this situation suitably, they are likely to have discontent in their divisions, and this discontent often expresses itself through absenteeism. Also, and this is an important point, the young officers have never been taught how to handle men. When I joined this ship, I found very few division officers who were keeping division books in which the station assignments for the various battle contingencies were noted - there were no division cards where the background of each man was recorded and analysed - there was little or no knowledge by the division officers of their men. This has been corrected, but it gives an idea of what may cause absenteeism.

I think that as time goes on, and as the large number of officers taken in the early days have become indoctrinated thoroughly, and as the V-12 program gets underway with its background of more experience at sea and in the service, more and more absenteeism will fade away.

4. Lack of Recognition of Fighting Personnel: When men have been in action they naturally develop a pride in their accomplishment, and especially so when the action has been successful. I think that they tend to develop a little bit of an ego which is, in my mind, not a bad thing. Then, on occasions, the ships on which they may be serving arrive in a mainland port, the men discover immediately that the general public makes little distinction between themselves and those who have never been in action. This naturally hurts their pride, makes them feel perhaps, "what's the use", and causes some to take a holiday and go somewhere where they will get recognition for their battle experience. This recognition can only be achieved at home, and therefore most of the absentees, I should judge, go to their homes for attention. The men seem to feel also that the Army, by issuing many medals, gives more recognition to services overseas and in combat than does the Navy. This lack of a medal or distinguishing mark of combat experience tends to hide the fact that the man in uniform before you has just returned from combat experience.

We Americans are naturally self-expressive, cocky and egotistical. We build up this idea by saying that our town is better than the next town, our unit is better than the next unit, our ship is better than the next ship, and we ourselves are better or equal to the next fellow. With this background, when our men come home from combat experience and find that what they have done means nothing, their ego gets punctured somewhat, their pride falls, and they "go over the hill". In this connection my men have told me that when on leave in San Francisco, for example, they found seamen second class who had been nowhere, wearing many ribbons which they had purchased in nearby stores. And this so irritated them that most of them would not wear any ribbons or stars at all.

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5. Lack of Uniformity of Punishment: In noting the punishment given men of this ship who remained behind when we sailed - and in this connection I am glad to say the number is reportedly small indeed when compared to other ships - I have noted that the punishment given varied from practically nothing up to General Courts Martial. And in one of the General Court Martial cases, the Commandant remitted almost the whole sentence. It seems to me that this question of a lack of punishment being assigned to men for being overleave, as well as a lack of uniformity in punishment for the same cause, has a lot to do with absenteeism. We have had men leave this ship who have written back to men on board and charged them with being dumb because they remained on board and took a chance on battle damage when they might have jumped ship and been assigned a nice billet in a nice mainland station. I think that there is a little less of this now than there was in the past, but I have just heard of a private, formerly in our Marine Guard, who jumped ship and reported in at some shore station, and now has been made a corporal. This is definitely not good for morale, and if carried to excess certainly would increase absenteeism.

6. Lack of Interest in Naval Career: Many men go "overleave", even when petty officers, because, as they themselves have often said, "they do not plan to remain in the Navy after the war." Their only real reason for maintaining a clear record, they say, is to help them to remain in the Navy, but as they do not desire to remain in the Navy, the need of a clear record is not too apparent. In their minds, therefore, thirty days unauthorized leave is well worth, for example, reduction in rating.

* * * *

The above ideas are, fortunately, far from universal, but they are common enough to contribute materially to the absentee percentage.

It would appear as if the proper way to control such absenteeism would be by severe courts martial sentences which, by their very nature, would deter would-be offenders. As there is little possibility of differentiating, in most cases, between the degree of culpability in the various cases of A.D.L. and A.S.C.L., it would further appear as if all punishments should, as a general thing, be severe.

* * * *

All of the above is not intended to disparage the American naval fighting man. He is generally quite young, quite uneducated in naval matters, quite simple, and very naive. I interrogated a man today who had been transferred to my ship from another ship, as to why he had been

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overleave on the other ship. He had a Deck Court in his record. (I make a practice of interrogating such men). He said, in most simple and direct language, "My father was sick and I simply had to stay away." His whole manner indicated that he felt that he hadn't committed any offense at all.

It seems to me that if we can cure him of such schoolboy ideas - if we can lead him properly - and if we can awaken our public to the fact that his being "overleave" or "absent without leave" is, in the Navy, an even worse offense than absenteeism in the factories producing war materials, we will have succeeded, in a large measure, in reducing this scourge to reasonable proportions.

R. H. BATES,
Captain, U. S. Navy.

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